

## HIS WIFE'S PURSE.

"Halves!" cried Damper as we both stooped simultaneously to pick up an inviting object lying on the pavement at our feet.

It was a purse, not a fat purse, but still a purse of undoubted respectability, shining and natty and brilliant as to clasp and corners—a purse that had assuredly been taken to the city to receive substantial dividends.

It's odd, but I immediately began to feel unaccountably antagonistic to Damper, and Damper on his side seemed to eye me with feelings of profound mistrust.

"Well, suppose we open it," I said grossly.

"Suppose we do, then," said Damper quite savagely.

We did. There were a few coins in one compartment, two postage stamps, and then, folded up in a corner, a piece of paper, peculiarly crisp and crackly.

"Oh, only some old bill, of course."

"Twenty dollars, by Jove!" cried Damper, who had managed to unfold the paper.

"A bank note!"

Now, Damper is well off, and I am considered rather a "warm" man among my friends, yet we suddenly felt as though we had come into a fortune. We gloated over the bank note, only we didn't seem to care about gloating together.

"Halves, you know," cried Damper warily: "\$22.40 and two stamps."

"That makes \$11.90 and a postage stamp each."

"I say, there was no name or address or anything of that kind in the purse?" suggested Damper, with awful hesitation.

Nothing. We felt as though our lives had been saved.

Well, we dined together. We seemed to hate each other cordially. I don't know why, but still we did not separate until all the money had been spent.

From that day we were changed men. First Damper called on me and began a dignified conversation of this kind:

"I say, Sloebay, heard that Grimsby lost his purse last week?"

I felt horribly uncomfortable, and why the deuce was my wife looking at me in that way? When she left the room, I whispered to Damper:

"I—I think that I have seen that purse before, Damper. Seem to remember it, you know. Have you got it on you?"

"Always have," he muttered sepulchral, and the purse was produced. But, my wife coming back just then, Damper made a dash at it and concealed it in his pocket.

The next time Damper called I noticed with consternation that my old friend had been evidently very thirsty and had satisfied that thirst in a spirit of thoughtless liberality.

"Sloebay," he whispered tearfully, "we ought to have advertised. I can't bear it. I can't pay attention to business. I am going into vicious courses. Everybody's been losing a purse. I must give myself up—I must!"

"Damper," I cried, "don't. Pause. Let us make amends in some other way. I am certain I know that purse. It must be Grimsby's."

The next day Grimsby received from anonymous donors two postoffice orders, each for \$11.90, and one postage stamp. In the evening, Damper called again, quite desperate.

"Grimsby had only \$5.35 in his purse!" Two announcements of \$11.90 and a stamp on the same subscription list struck some people as startling.

I began to slink down side streets when I saw a policeman on the horizon.

And, worst of all, I saw—too clearly, alas!—my wife suspected me. She watched my face. She started when a purse or bank note was mentioned. My hair was getting gray.

At last the blow came. Damper called late. He was on the way to Waterloo bridge. He said he had come to perform a last duty.

"It's burning me. It's—it's like eternal dyspepsia," he exclaimed in the best manner of Mr. Irving. "There, take it. I can bear it no longer."

And he threw the purse, the proof of our crime, on the table. My wife entered. I made frantic efforts to reach the purse. It was too far. She ran and cried:

"My purse!"

She looked guilty.

"I thought you would think me so foolish to lose so much money in the street like that, and—and I didn't like to tell you. I thought I would make it out of the housekeeping expenses. And you suspected me all the while!"

She cried. But what a supper we had that night! I filled the purse with gold coins and gave it to my wife. Damper sang three comic songs, but we didn't say anything about going halves.—London News.

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